



Competitive Grant

A n n o u n c e m e n t

Mental Health Courts Program

Fiscal Year
2002

Submission Deadline
September 13, 2002

BJA



About OJP

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice, was created in 1984 to provide federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist crime victims. OJP carries out this mission by forming partnerships with other federal, state, and local agencies as well as national and community-based organizations. OJP is dedicated to comprehensive approaches that empower communities to address crime, break the cycle of substance abuse and crime, combat family violence, address youth crime, hold offenders accountable, protect and support crime victims, enhance law enforcement initiatives, respond to domestic terrorism, and support advancements in adjudication. OJP also works to reduce crime in Indian Country, enhance technology's use within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and support state and local efforts through technical assistance and training.

About BJA


The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, supports innovative programs that strengthen the nation's criminal justice system. Its primary mission is to provide leadership and a range of assistance to local criminal justice strategies to make America's communities safer. BJA accomplishes this mission by providing funding, training, technical assistance, and information to state and community criminal justice programs and by emphasizing the coordination of federal, state, and local efforts. BJA's specific goals are to help communities reduce and prevent crime, violence, and drug abuse and to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system.

For general information about BJA programs, training, and technical assistance, contact the BJA Clearinghouse at 1-800-688-4252 or visit the BJA home page at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA.

Program funded under America's Law Enforcement and Mental Health Project, Public Law 106-515, November 13, 2000.

For Help With Your Proposal

Staff of the Bureau of Justice Assistance are available at 202-616-8933 to answer questions about this solicitation. Applicants will receive a postcard acknowledging BJA's receipt of their application 4 to 6 weeks following the submission deadline. For general information about BJA programs and training and technical assistance, contact the BJA Clearinghouse at 1-800-688-4252 or visit the BJA home page at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA.



Supporting Mental Health Courts

One of the most challenging problems facing communities today is caused when people with mental disabilities fall through the cracks of community social safety nets and come into contact with the criminal justice system. A number of communities have applied innovative problem-solving methods to address the needs of people who are disabled by mental illness. These pioneering, therapeutically oriented mental health court approaches share common characteristics:

- ◆ Voluntary participation of defendants.
- ◆ Demonstrable mental illness or disability of defendants that likely contributed to their crimes.
- ◆ Deferred prosecution pending completion of prescribed treatment protocol.
- ◆ Concern for public safety in arranging services for offenders in the community.
- ◆ Identification of candidates early in the criminal justice process.

Coordination With SAMHSA

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, is coordinating the Mental Health Courts initiative with a program of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)—Targeted Capacity Expansion Grants for Jail Diversion Programs, GFA No. SM02–010. The agencies will collaborate on the implementation and analysis of these two programs with the goals of improving policies and practices and ensuring that the Federal Government does not fund overlapping diversion models.

SAMHSA will fund grants for pre- and post-booking diversion that does not involve continuous judicial oversight, treatment, and case disposition. BJA will fund grants for mental health courts and will limit its funding to models in which continuous judicial oversight and intensive case management are key design components.

Eligible Applicants

States, state courts, local courts, units of local government, and tribal governments may apply for funding under this initiative.

Eligible Expenses

All expenses must be new and cannot replace existing funding. Funding may be used for salaries, fringe benefits, contracts and professional services, travel, training, equipment, and supplies needed for the proposed program, including operations and the development of treatment services.

Match Requirement

The federal share of this grant may not exceed 75 percent of the program's total costs. The grantee must provide a match that is at minimum 25 percent of the program's total costs. The match may be cash, in-kind, or a combination of both.

Amount and Length of Awards

Up to 20 demonstration projects may be awarded under this solicitation. The maximum award will be \$150,000 for a grant period of up to 24 months.

Overview of the Application Process

This solicitation uses an abbreviated proposal process. Applicants will submit a project narrative describing their proposed program. Applicants will not be required to submit the standard forms generally required by grant solicitations.

Applicants must, however, include a transmittal letter from the applicant agency's chief executive officer that expresses support for the program and guarantees that a match is available should the proposal be funded. Additionally, because the applications will be divided into two groups based on size of population (see Review Process), the letter must include the size of the population of the proposed court's jurisdiction.

In the event your proposal is selected for funding, BJA staff will work with you to complete the application process via our online system. Online application is needed to provide the grant.

Program Requirements

The purpose of this grant solicitation is to fund mental health court demonstration projects that mobilize communities to implement innovative, collaborative efforts to bring systemwide improvements in the way they address adult offenders with mental disabilities or illnesses. At the center of the service delivery system is the case manager.

Community involvement should include, but not be limited to, the educational system, the recreational system, mental health systems, drug and alcohol treatment programs, and employment and housing assistance. Through this grant program, we hope to decrease the offender's frequency of contact with the criminal justice system by improving his or her social functioning through stable employment, housing, treatment, and support services.

At a minimum, proposed projects must deliver:

- ◆ Continuing judicial supervision, including periodic review, of preliminarily qualified offenders who are charged with misdemeanors or nonviolent offenses and who have mental illness, mental retardation, or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders.
- ◆ Coordinated delivery of services that include:
 - ❖ Specialized training of criminal justice personnel to identify and address the unique needs of mentally ill or mentally retarded offenders.
 - ❖ Voluntary outpatient or inpatient mental health treatment, in the least restrictive manner appropriate, as determined by the court. Offenders who complete treatment may have their charges dismissed or their sentences reduced or deferred.
 - ❖ Centralized case management involving the consolidation of mentally ill or mentally disabled defendants' cases (including probation violations) and the coordination of mental health and substance abuse treatment plans and social services, which may include life skills training, placement, health care, and relapse prevention.
 - ❖ Continuing supervision of treatment plan compliance for a term not to exceed the maximum allowable sentence or probation for the charged or relevant offense and, to the extent practicable, continuing psychiatric care at the end of the supervised period.

Developing and Writing the Grant Application

Following are the steps you will need to take to write your grant proposal. The application narrative may not be more than 10 pages, double spaced, in at least 12-point type.

Your narrative should be an overview that includes only as much detail as is necessary to understand how your proposed program will work. It is not necessary to include detailed program procedures.

Step One: Identify the Community Partnership (10 Points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on the level of commitment of the mental health system, the justice system, and related organizations and their willingness to devote resources to the program.

- ◆ List and briefly describe the commitment of the local partners who will be involved in the mental health court program. Include advocates, mental health and substance abuse providers, jail administrators, community corrections officials, law enforcement professionals, prosecutors, the defense bar, the judiciary, victim advocates, and other community and business leaders.

Step Two: Assess and Describe Community Readiness (20 Points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on the need for the program and the level of programs and services already in place in the community. The goal is to ensure the program's success and sustainment.

- ◆ Briefly describe the conditions in your community that show a need for a mental health court. Provide any data or other information that can support this need.
- ◆ Briefly describe related governmental or community initiatives that complement or will be coordinated with the proposal and what components of a mental health court program already exist in your community.

Step Three: Determine the Gaps in Resources (5 Points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on how well the applicant has assessed what is needed to build a mental health court program.

- ◆ Assess and briefly describe what components you need to implement a full program.
- ◆ Describe briefly why the community cannot fund these components and needs federal funding.

Step Four: Describe the Mental Health Court Design (35 Points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on how well thought out and comprehensive the proposed mental health court program is. Proposals that go beyond the required program components to describe a broader variety of services and innovative strategies will receive higher points. BJA will fund only those projects that are voluntary for the defendant and involve continuing judicial oversight and deferred prosecution pending completion of treatment and support services.

In this section, describe how your mental health court will work, from client assessment through graduation. Although this section should be the longest in your proposal, you need provide only as much detail as is necessary for BJA to understand how the court will work, with what agencies and organizations the court will collaborate, and how clients will progress through the system. It is not necessary to provide detailed procedures for each step; a brief explanation will suffice.

Step Five: Determine How You Will Measure Success (10 points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on how well thought out the process is for objectively and regularly assessing your program's effectiveness.

After reviewing the Performance Measures section of this solicitation, describe any information beyond that required in the section that explains your program's goals and how you will measure your progress toward them.

Step Six: Summarize the Budget (10 Points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on the program's cost effectiveness. BJA will compare the overall funds requested with other portions of the application, such as the services to be provided and the estimated number of offenders to be included in the program.

In this section, provide a brief budget summary describing what you request in federal support for the 2-year grant period. Provide a funding amount for the following categories and under each briefly list the types of expenses to be covered. It is not necessary to define each expenditure.

For example, under Travel and Training you might simply provide a budget amount and explain that the costs will be used for attending BJA training and technical assistance forums and for providing training for local law enforcement and other justice personnel.

Budget Categories:

- ◆ Personnel and Fringe Benefits
- ◆ Contractual and Professional Services
- ◆ Travel and Training
- ◆ Supplies and Operating Expenses
- ◆ Equipment
- ◆ Indirect Costs

Additionally, the budget should indicate the amount of matching funds or indirect donations to be contributed to the program.

Note: Over the 2-year grant period, grantees will be required to attend two BJA training and

technical assistance forums in Washington, D.C. Be sure to either consider this in your travel budget or ensure that other funds will be available.

Step Seven: Describe Your Plan for Project Sustainment (10 Points)

Points in this category will be awarded based on how well your program can be integrated into the local justice system and on the commitment of the mental health system, the justice system, and other partners to continuing the program after federal funding ends.

In this section, describe your plans for obtaining the support you will need to continue the program following the end of federal support. You must discuss:

- ◆ Integration of your initiative into the local justice system.
- ◆ Plans or local commitments to sustain the program after this federal grant ends.
- ◆ The role of state mental health agency, state alcohol and substance abuse agency, court administrator, and other relevant state authorities in the design and implementation of the mental health court and how it will translate into the long term.

Submitting Applications

The 10-page project narrative must be submitted with a transmittal letter on agency letterhead that expresses support for the program and guarantees the required match. The letter must be signed by the applicant agency's chief executive officer. Additionally, because the applications will be divided into two groups based on size of population (see Review Process), the letter must include the size of the population of the proposed court's jurisdiction.

Submit the original (with the letter signed by the CEO) and seven copies of the application to:

Bureau of Justice Assistance
Attn: BJA Control Desk
5640 Nicholson Lane, Suite 300
Rockville, MD 20852

Proposals must be postmarked or received no later than **September 13, 2002**. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. Applicants will receive a postcard acknowledging BJA's receipt of their application 4 to 6 weeks following the submission deadline.

Review Process

BJA will establish peer review teams. Each proposal will be reviewed by three peer reviewers according to the point scale listed for each of the seven proposal development steps. Scores will then be averaged and ordered by rank. BJA is required by statute to ensure an equitable distribution of grant awards that considers the special needs of rural and tribal communities. Reviewers will rank applications according to the following categories and will give preference to the top-ranked eligible applications in each.

Category 1: Jurisdictions with fewer than 150,000 people, including tribal governments.

Category 2: Jurisdictions with more than 150,000 people.

The rankings of the reviewers will form the funding recommendations sent to the Director of BJA, who will make recommendations to the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs.

Award Process

After proposals are selected for funding, a BJA grant manager will contact each selected applicant and describe the process for completing the

required forms, certifications, and detailed budget needed to release funds. In addition to the standard certifications, grantees will be required to certify to the following:

- ◆ The federal support provided will be used to supplement, and not supplant, tribal, state, and local sources of funding that are otherwise available.
- ◆ There has been appropriate consultation with all affected agencies, and there will be appropriate coordination with all affected agencies in the implementation of the program, including the state mental health authority.
- ◆ Participating offenders will be supervised by one or more designated judges with responsibility for the mental health court program.
- ◆ First-time participants without a history of a mental illness will receive a mental health evaluation.
- ◆ The program is capable of gathering and tracking the data needed to evaluate its success.

After BJA receives all required forms, applicants may expect award documents within 1 month and can begin expending and drawing grant funds.

Performance Measures

Grantees are required to measure and report project performance in semiannual progress reports. Applicants are required to report on both community and client performance measures (see below). In addition to incorporating this information into your narrative, you must also address the type of information you will collect, who will collect the information and the methods of collection, and how the information will be reported. If you are selected for an award, you will be expected to provide interim data in your semiannual progress reports and submit the final

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results as part of your final progress report. BJA and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) will identify an evaluator to examine program results.

Community Performance Measures

Goal: Establish appropriate community partnerships.

Performance Indicators:

- ◆ Number of partnerships established with appropriate community resources.
- ◆ Number of training courses to criminal justice and mental health communities.
- ◆ Number of people trained.

Client Performance Measures

Goal: Provide appropriate treatment and services to the mentally ill offender. Each client receives an initial assessment and individual treatment plan at time of entry into the project.

Performance Indicators:

- ◆ Number of clients evaluated with assessment and treatment plan.

- ◆ Number of clients deferred from prosecution to mental health courts.
- ◆ Number of clients receiving services.
- ◆ Number and type of services provided.
- ◆ Number completing treatment plan as prescribed.

Additional Information

Formal Evaluation

To further support research and evaluation, BJA and NIJ will select a number of sites under the Mental Health Courts Program to participate in a process and impact evaluation.

Technical Assistance

Through this program, BJA will make available training and technical assistance opportunities to all grantees. Onsite assistance and training will be available to help grantees plan and develop their programs as well as measure outcomes.

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Washington, DC 20531

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